

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEGUCI 00053 051359Z
ACTION SS-25

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P R 042144Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9004
INFO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

S E C R E T TEGUCIGALPA 0053

EXDIS

FOR ARA ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN
SAN SALVADOR FOR AMBASSADOR DEVINE

FROM AMBASSADOR JARAMILLO

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PBOR, HO, ES
SUBJECT: HONDURAN PEACE INITIATIVE

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 0019

1. AFTER THE CONVERSATION WITH CESAR BATRES (PRTOECT) REPORTED
REFTEL HE CALLED TO SAY THAT THE ISSUE DISCUSSED WAS MOVING
MORE RAPIDLY THAN EXPECTED AND ASKED IF I COULD MEET WITH
HIM. ACCOMPANIED BY EMBASSY POLOFF, WE MET FOR AN HOUR
DURING THE MORNING OF JANUARY 4. HE SAID THAT CHIEF OF STATE
GENERAL MELGAR AN PRESIDENT ROMERO ALONG WITH A VERY
SMALL RETINUE ARE NOW PLANNING TO MEET SOMEWHERE ON THE
BORDER THIS COMING WEEKEND. NO PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT IS
PLANNED BEFOREHAND, BUT A COMMUNIQUE WILL PROBABLY BE
RELEASED AFTERWARD.

2. BATRES AMPLIFIED HIS PREVIOUS DESCRIPTION OF THE MEETING'S
PURPOSE FROM HONDURAS' POINT OF VIEW. HE EXPLAINED THAT
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THE GOH IS VERY CONCERNED - EVEN CONVINCED - THAT IF THE
DISPUTE IS NOT SOON SETTLED, WAR CAN BREAK OUT AGAIN. HE
AGREED WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT GIVEN THE MORE MODERN AND BETTER
TRAINED MILITARY FORCES BOTH COUNTRIES NOW HAVE, AN OUTBREAK
OF HOSTILITIES WOULD BE FAR MORE SANGUINARY THAN IN 1969.
EVEN WITHOUT FIGHTING, HE LAMENTED THE MONEY NECESSARILY
SPENT ON DEFENSE NEEDS (MENTIONING AMONG OTHER THINGS

SUPER-MYSTERES) THAT COULD BETTER BE USED FOR DEVELOPMENT.

3. BATRES HOPES THE BORDER MEETING WILL DETERMINE THAT THE GOES IS READY TO SERIOUSLY NEGOTIATE A PEACE TREATY. HE SAID THAT FOR HONDURAS THE CRUCIAL FACTOR WILL BE SALVADOR'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF THE BORDER. BOTH SIDES, AFTER EIGHT YEARS OF NEGOTIATION, KNOW THE OTHERS NEGOTIATING POSITION FAIRLY WELL AND, HE SAID, KNOW IF AGREEMENT CAN BE REACHED. HE DESCRIBED PREVIOUS MEETINGS AND SAID THAT THEY ARE ALREADY IN AGREEMENT FOR MUCH OF THE BORDER. HE HOPES THAT EL SALVADOR WILL AGREE TO DELINEATE THE BORDER WHERE POSSIBLE BUT ALSO AGREE THAT WHAT CANNOT BE ESTABLISHED RIGHT AWAY WILL BE SUBMITTED TO BINDING ARBITRATION OR THE INTERNATIONAL COURT. BATRES SAID THAT IN FACT THE TWO COUNTRIES ARE IN AGREEMENT ON WHERE THE BORDER IS EXCEPT FOR THE SIX POCKETS, THAT TWO OF THESE POCKETS CAN BE RESOLVED EASILY, TWO ARE NOT IMPOSSIBLE OF RESOLUTION AND TWO PRESENT SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR EACH SIDE. HE CALLED THE OAS OBSERVERS "ANONYMOUS HEROES" OF THE PRESENT SITUATION.

4. IF THE GOES IS PREPARED TO MOVE AHEAD ALONG THESE LINES, BATRES SAID THE GOH IS READY TO RESOLVE ALL OF THE OTHER ISSUES OUTSTANDING (I.E. PANAM HIGHWAY, IMMIGRATION, TRADE, ETC). BATRES SAID THAT HONDURAS AND EL SALVADOR ARE NATURAL TRADING PARTNERS AND SAID THAT IF THE KIND OF
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UNDERSTANDING DESCRIBED ABOVE IS REACHED, THE GOH IS READY TO BEGIN NEGOTIATING ON ECONOMIC MATTERS WITH THE GOES. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE GOH RECOGNIZES THAT SALVADORAN INFLOW INTO HONDURAS WILL CONTINUE BUT THAT RESOLUTION OF THE BORDER WOULD REMOVE THE INCENDIARY NATURE OF THE SITUATION. HE BELIEVES THAT THERE ARE CONFLICTING PRESSURES ON THE GOES THAT MILITATE BOTH FOR AND AGAINST A SOLUTION BUT THAT THERE ARE ALSO STRONG ECONOMIC REASONS WHICH ARGUE IN FAVOR. BATRES ENVISAGES THREE CHANNELS OF NEGOTIATIONS, I.E. THE BORDER NEGOTIATIONS, ECONOMIC DISCUSSIONS TO BEGIN A BIT LATER, AND AN OPEN LINE BETWEEN MELGAR AND ROMERO FOR DIFFICULT PROBLEMS. IN EFFECT, HE SAID THE GOH DOESN'T WANT A HARD-NOSED NEGOTIATION OVER EACH MINOR POINT. IT WANTS THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE ACCEPTED THAT AN AGREEMENT WILL BE REACHED WITH THE NEGOTIATORS SIMPLY FILLING IT OUT.

5. AT THE SAME TIME, HE SAID, HE RECOGNIZES THAT THE GOES MAY NOT BE READY TO NEGOTIATE SO RAPIDLY. THE GOH WANTS TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE NOW, BUT IS ALSO PREPARED TO DISCOVER THAT THE GOES, FOR INTERNAL REASONS, CANNOT DO SO. IF THAT IS THE CASE THE GOH WANTS TO KNOW AND T

CAN THEN PREPARE ITS OWN PUBLIC OPINION FOR A LONGER PULL.

6. BATRES LEAVES ME WITH NO DOUBT AS TO THE PRIORITY OF THE GOH'S DESIRE TO RESOLVE THIS ISSUE, OR HIS REAL FEAR THAT IT CONSTITUTES A SERIOUS POTENTIAL THREAT TO PEACE. HE MADE NO REQUEST FOR ANY ACTION ON OUR PART, BUT DID MAKE IT CLEAR THAT BECAUSE KE KNOWS THE U.S. IS INTERESTED IN THE DISPUTE HE WANTED YOU TO KNOW THE STATE-OF-PLAY, AND WOULD WELCOME DISCREET SUPPORT IF IT BECAME APPROPRIATE.
JARAMILLO

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